

B-2354

Baltimore Bargain House
200-208 West Baltimore Street
Public

1911-1912

The Baltimore Bargain House is architecturally significant as one of the most massive downtown Baltimore office buildings constructed in the early 20th century; the design of an important local architect, Joseph E. Sperry; and one of the few older high rise office buildings left standing in the vicinity of Charles Center after the urban renewal programs of the 1960's. The building is also historically significant as the former home of the City's largest wholesale establishments and the symbol of Jacob Epstein's wholesaling empire. The development of the building is closely linked to the life of Jacob Epstein, an immigrant Jewish peddler who became one of the City's leading citizens.

Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

Survey No. B-2354

Magi No. 0423545711

DOE ☐ yes ☒ no

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic Baltimore Bargain House (preferred)

and/or common Civic Plaza Building

2. Location

street & number 200-208 West Baltimore Street ☐ not for publicationcity, town Baltimore ☐ vicinity of congressional district 3rd

state Maryland county

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial <input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational <input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name State of Maryland, Dr. Russell Faust

street & number 200 W. Baltimore Street telephone no.:

city, town Baltimore state and zip code Maryland 21201

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Baltimore City Courthouse liber

street & number Calvert & Fayette Streets folio

city, town Baltimore state Maryland

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title Baltimore Retail District

date 1980 ☒ federal ☐ state ☐ county ☒ local

depository for survey records Commission for Historical and Architectural Preservation

city, town Baltimore state Maryland

7. Description

Survey No. B-2354

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date of move _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

SUMMARY:

The Baltimore Bargain House is a ten-story brick and reinforced concrete commercial building in Classical Revival style erected in 1911 on the northwest corner of West Baltimore and Liberty Streets in central Baltimore, Maryland. The two main elevations of the building face Liberty and Baltimore Streets and are joined by a curving corner. The base of the building is limestone faced to the second story and the upper stories are brick with limestone belt courses. The cornice is extraordinarily wide with a deep overhang and pairs of large stone brackets. The building is currently occupied by a men's wear store on the street level and the Maryland State Department of Education on the upper floors.

The Baltimore Bargain House is a large brick and reinforced concrete structure of ten stories with a small mezzanine, full basement, and sub-basement. The front facade of the building is 25 bays wide and curves around the intersection of West Baltimore and Liberty Streets.

The exterior of the building is trimmed in limestone to the second floor level. Entrances to the building are on Baltimore Street at the southwest corner and on Liberty Street at the northeast corner. The first level has been considerably altered with storefronts. Fifteen rounded and squared pilasters divide the first two levels. Two groupings of four 1/1 windows are defined by the pilasters. The Baltimore Street entrance is set into a limestone arch with projecting keystones and decorative spandrels. A dentil cornice and blank entablature complete the lower levels of the building.

The next seven stories of the building are identical. Each floor is set off by a stone belt course. The windows are grouped in pairs, except for the windows at the Baltimore-Liberty corner which are in groups of three. The windows are 6/6 double hung sash with splayed brick lintels and stone keystones. The sills are formed by the stone belt courses. A decorative stone belt course with dentils and rondels separate the intermediate stories from the upper two stories.

The upper two stories feature windows set into an arcade. Decorative marble panels with rectangular diamond motifs are inset in the masonry and divide the two floors. The lower level windows are flat with 6/6 lights. The upper level windows are fully arched with 6/6 lights. The roof cornice is double bracketed between bays. The roof is covered with built-up tar and crushed stone.

The northern facade of the building is located along a narrow alley. Windows have long narrow 3/3 lights with stone sills and splayed gauged brick lintels. A fire escape is located at the northeastern corner. The western elevation formerly adjoined a five story parking garage, but the garage has been recently demolished and the party wall of the Bargain House is exposed at present. Five windows, identical to those on the north elevation are located at the rear of the top five floors. A faded sign reading "Baltimore Bargain House" is visible at the top of the southeast corner.

8. Significance

Survey No.

B-2354

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
				<u>local history</u>

Specific dates 1911-1912 **Builder/Architect** Joseph E. Sperry

check: Applicable Criteria: ☐ A ☒ B ☒ C ☐ D
and/or

Applicable Exception: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Level of Significance: ☐ national ☐ state ☒ local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

SUMMARY:

The Baltimore Bargain House is architecturally significant as one of the most massive downtown Baltimore office buildings constructed in the early 20th century; the design of an important local architect, Joseph E. Sperry; and one of the few older high rise office buildings left standing in the vicinity of Charles Center after the urban renewal programs of the 1960's. The building is also historically significant as the former home of the City's largest wholesale establishments and the symbol of Jacob Epstein's wholesaling empire. The development of the building is closely linked to the life of Jacob Epstein, an immigrant Jewish peddler who became one of the City's leading citizens.

History and Support:

In 1879, at age 15, Jacob Epstein and a close friend left their native Lithuania to settle in Baltimore. Epstein soon became a peddler selling his wares in western Maryland, West Virginia, and Pennsylvania. By 1881, he had saved enough money to buy his own store at 48 West Barre Street and he later sent money to bring the rest of his family to America. Familiar with the needs of peddlers, Epstein started a jobbing business selling merchandise such as oil cloth, dress goods, and kitchenware, primarily to Jewish peddlers of the south. Some of his early bills were written in Yiddish.

Business prospered and he soon moved to larger quarters and hired two assistants. By 1886, the business grew to include wholesaling for small retail stores and supplies such as clothing and jewelry. This necessitated still another move to larger quarters. By 1894, he had 200 employees and moved to 216 West Baltimore Street, calling his business "Baltimore's Bargain House". At that time, he initiated catalogue sales, reducing the expenses connected with employing traveling salesmen. Epstein's building survived the Baltimore fire of 1904 and soon after his business expanded to adjacent buildings on Baltimore Street and an annex was built on Fayette Street. In 1904, the Bargain House employed 800 clerks and 100 bookkeepers. Sales also reached the \$1 million mark in certain months. By that time Epstein was doing business throughout the United States. In addition, an export company was established. In 1905, warehouses were acquired and by 1907, Epstein had four trucks, his own composition room for laying out catalogues, and his own clothing plant. By 1911, it soon became apparent that a new building was needed---one which would be worthy of the firm.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Survey No. B-2354

See Section 9 of 1979 Inventory form completed by CHAP.

Baltimore Magazine, August 1940.

Levy, Lester S., Jacob Epstein. Baltimore: Marian Press, 1978.

Power Pictorial, May 1932.

10. Geographical Data

Acree of nominated property .455

Quadrangle name Baltimore East

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References do NOT complete UTM references

A

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Zone Easting Northing

B

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Zone Easting Northing

C

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

D

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

E

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

F

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

G

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

H

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Verbal boundary description and justification

co-terminous with irregular-sized lot approx. 169 ft. x 158 ft. x 156 ft. by 95 ft.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Janet Davis and Fred Shoken, Historical Preservation Analyst

organization Comm. for Hist. & Arch. Pres. (CHAP) date Oct. 1979 and April 1986

street & number 118 No. Howard Street, Rm. 606 telephone 396-4866

city or town Baltimore state Maryland 21201

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust
Shaw House
21 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(301) 269-2438

Description, cont'd.
Section 7, page 2

The Baltimore Street entrance of the building leads to a first floor marble lobby, while the Liberty Street entrance provides access to the ground floor. There are separate entrances to the ground floor retail establishments. Reinforced concrete piers support the floors on all levels on a 20-foot center throughout. Floors are covered with asphalt tile. Ceilings are mostly dropped, with acoustical tile. Walls are painted masonry and sheet rock. Lighting on all floors is fluorescent. Most of the floors have large open "bull pen" office spaces with smaller private offices located along the Baltimore and Liberty walls. Each floor has two lavatories and access via elevator and stairs. The basement level of the building is used for storage and mechanical systems.

The cost of the land and the construction of the new Baltimore Bargain House was \$2 million. The real estate transaction was the largest in the mercantile history of the city up to that time. Epstein wanted his building to be dignified, with marble floors and teller-like cages for cashiers and credit officers. The firm required a huge amount of space and the new building had 19,000 square feet of office space on each floor -- the largest wholesale establishment in the South.

Epstein hired Joseph Evans Sperry as his architect. Sperry had previously designed Epstein's magnificent house on Eutaw Place in 1904. (The building was proposed as a Baltimore City Landmark; however, it was demolished in 1969). Sperry also designed the Emerson Bromo Seltzer Tower, a National Register site, the Provident Savings Bank, also a National Register site, and the Eutaw Place Temple in the Bolton Hill Historic District. Sperry's Bargain House was on a much larger scale than any of the surrounding structures. Its pronounced cornice was extremely unusual for an office building. Today the building stands out as one of the few large early 20th century buildings in the Charles vicinity which has survived the urban renewal programs of the 1960's.

Upon the opening of the building in 1912, Folger McKinzey wrote a poem lauding the symbolic nature of the massive structure in relation to Epstein's life and business:

Fronting with broad face on the busy street
Its aspect massive, noble, leonine.
Designed on simple graces, but complete
The casual vision marks it strong and fine.
... There it stands
A monument to toil of heart and hands,
Based on the small beginnings dating back
Unto street stand and the oilcloth pack.
The embryo store, the tiny wareroom, skill,
To purchase wisely, sell with wisdom, till
The little added to a little more
Sets the emporium where the little store
Stood in its small beginnings, and the end
Is the skyscraper, with its lines that blend
In perfect unison with street and town--
A young life-effort's fitting knob and crown!

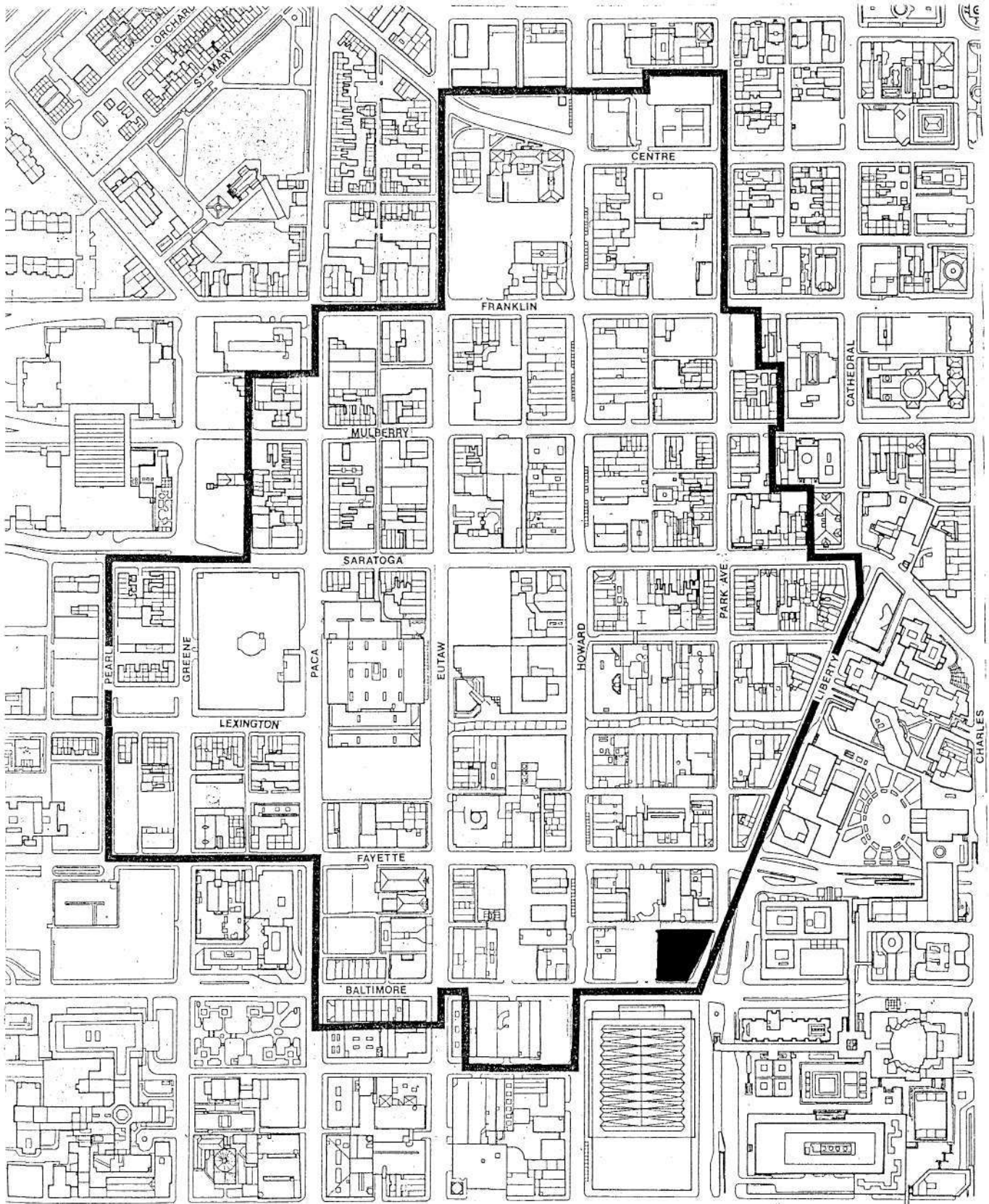
The Tower of Trade upon the Muses calls,
And song sees clear to set forth in clear light
That not the steel, the brick, the mortar tell
All of the story of this landmark bright,
But that within its massive frame the spell
Of all Time stands for in the trade of life
Is centered firmly - here a human strife
Against great odds, a boyish will and dream,
Rises in cognate glory, floor and beam
Builted on manly spirit, judgement, a gift
The inner self the outer self to lift,
And having lifted to give self again
Back in great gifts of charity to men!

The Baltimore Bargain House continued to prosper after the new building was erected. By 1919, the business was incorporated as the American Wholesale Corporation and stock was offered for sale. By 1920, the

(continue, please)

corporation employed 1,600. In the 1920's, however, with competition from variety stores growing, Epstein decided to retire. In 1929, the corporation was sold and the former Bargain House building was leased to Butler Brothers, a nationwide wholesaler. Epstein's final years were devoted to philanthropic interests and, upon his death in 1945, his outstanding art collection was given to the Baltimore Museum of Art.

The Butler Brothers Building, as the former Bargain House was called, continued to serve as a wholesale establishment for the next 25 years. Butler Brothers was founded in 1877 in Boston and grew to encompass seven distribution houses in Chicago, St. Louis, Boston, Minneapolis, Dallas, San Francisco, New York, and Baltimore. Other interests controlled by Butler Brothers were the Ben Franklin and Federated Stores. The interior of the Butler Building was extensively remodeled in 1940 and when it reopened, a local magazine called its displays the finest in America. In 1943, a reorganization of the company took place and the firm reduced its occupancy of the building to only the ninth floor and leased the remaining floors. In 1958, the building was sold to a New York firm. Now publicly owned, the building remains an excellent candidate for rehabilitation and preservation as an early 20th century office building.

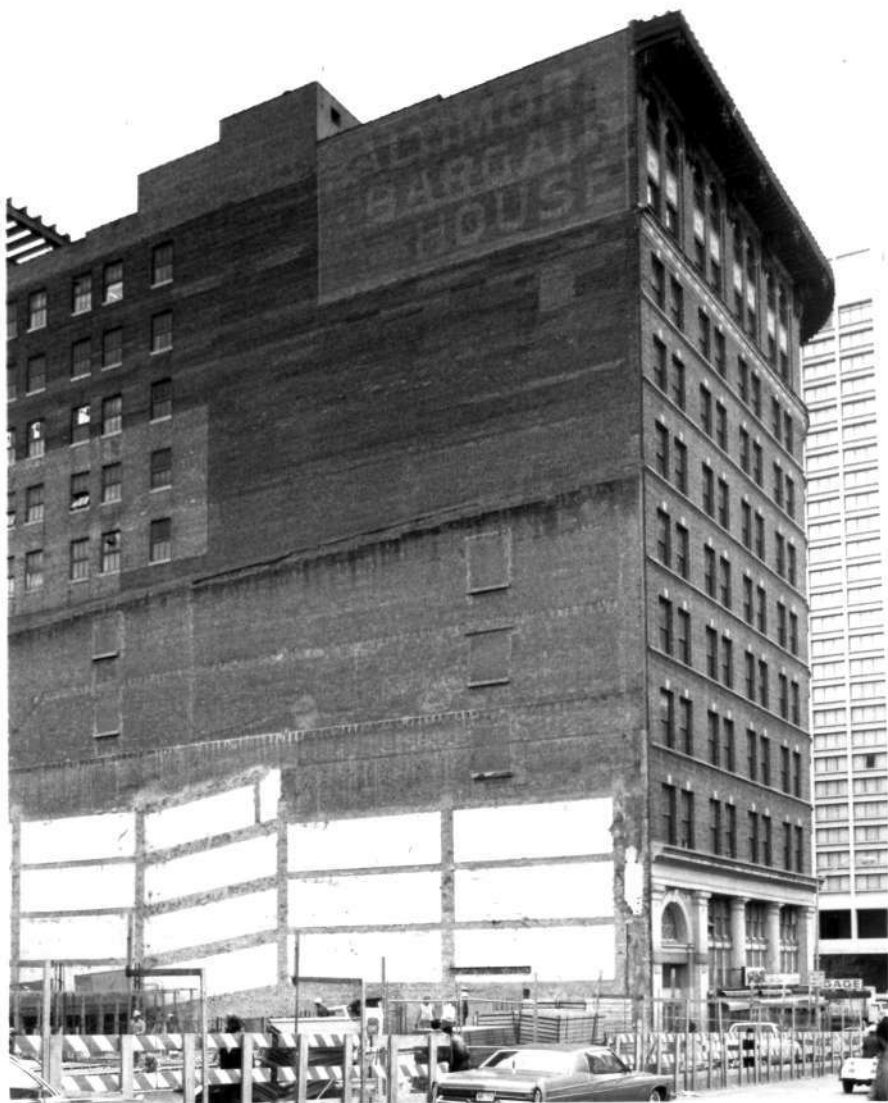


Baltimore Metrocenter Survey
 Market Center
 Baltimore Bargain House
 200-208 West Baltimore Street
 B-2354





Baltimore Bargain House B-2354
200-208 West Baltimore Street
Market Center - Metrocenter Survey
Baltimore (City), Maryland
Photo: Janet Davis
March 1986
Neg. loc.: Maryland Historical Trust
General view from southeast.



Baltimore Bargain House B-2354
200-208 West Baltimore Street
Market Center - Metrocenter Survey
Baltimore (City), Maryland
Photo: Janet Davis
March 1986
Neg. loc.: Maryland Historical Trust
West elevation

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Baltimore Bargain House or Butler Brothers Building

AND/OR COMMON

Civic Plaza Building

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

200 West Pratt Street

CITY, TOWN

Baltimore

— VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Third

STATE

Maryland 21201

COUNTY

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

—DISTRICT

☒ BUILDING(S)

—STRUCTURE

—SITE

—OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

—PUBLIC

☒ PRIVATE

—BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

—IN PROCESS

—BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

☒ OCCUPIED

—UNOCCUPIED

—WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

☒ YES: RESTRICTED

—YES: UNRESTRICTED

—NO

PRESENT USE

—AGRICULTURE

☒ COMMERCIAL

—EDUCATIONAL

—ENTERTAINMENT

—GOVERNMENT

—INDUSTRIAL

—MILITARY

—MUSEUM

—PARK

—PRIVATE RESIDENCE

—RELIGIOUS

—SCIENTIFIC

—TRANSPORTATION

—OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Civic Plaza Inc.

Telephone #:

STREET & NUMBER

200 West Baltimore Street

CITY, TOWN

Baltimore

— VICINITY OF

STATE, zip code

Maryland 21201

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTIONCOURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Records Office Room 601

Liber #:

Folio #:

STREET & NUMBER

Baltimore City Courthouse

CITY, TOWN

Baltimore

STATE

Maryland 21201

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

1979

—FEDERAL —STATE —COUNTY ☒ LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Commission for Historic and Architectural Preservation

CITY, TOWN

Baltimore

STATE

Maryland 21202

7 DESCRIPTION**CONDITION**

☐ EXCELLENT
☒ GOOD
☐ FAIR

☐ DETERIORATED
☐ RUINS
☐ UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

☐ UNALTERED
☒ ALTERED

CHECK ONE

☐ ORIGINAL SITE
☐ MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Civic Plaza Building is a large brick and reinforced concrete structure in downtown Baltimore. It is ten stories high with a small mezzanine, full basement and sub-basement. The front facade of the building is twenty-five bays wide and curves around a prominent Baltimore intersection.

The exterior of the building is trimmed in limestone to the second floor level. Entrances to the building are on Baltimore Street at the southwest corner of the building and on Liberty Street at the northeast corner of the building. The first level has been considerably altered with storefronts. Fifteen rounded and squared pilasters divide the first two levels. Two groupings of four, one over one windows are defined by the pilasters. The Baltimore Street entrance is set into a limestone arch with projecting keystones and decorative spandrels. A dentiled limestone cornice and blank entablature complete the lower levels of the building.

The next seven levels of the building are identical. Each floor is divided by a stone band course. The windows are grouped in pairs, except for the windows at the corner of Baltimore and Liberty which are grouped in threes. The windows are double hung six over six with splayed brick lintels and stone keystones. The sills are formed by the stone string courses. A decorative stone band course with dentils and rondells separate these levels from the upper two stories.

The upper two stories feature windows set into an arcade. Decorative marble panels with rectangular diamond motifs are inset in the masonry and divide the two floors. The lower level windows are flat with six over six lights. The upper level windows.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1911

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Joseph Sperry

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Civic Plaza Building is architecturally significant as: one of the most massive downtown Baltimore office buildings constructed in the early twentieth century; the design of an important local architect; and one of the few older high rise office buildings left standing in the vicinity of Charles Center after the urban renewal programs of the 1960's. The building is historically significant as: the former home of the City's largest wholesale establishments; and most importantly, a symbol of the culmination of Jacob Epstein's wholesaling empire. The development of the building is intimately linked to the life of Jacob Epstein, the rags to riches story of an immigrant Jewish peddler who worked himself up to one of the City's leading citizens.

In 1879, at age 15, Jacob Epstein and a close friend left their native Lithuania to settle in Baltimore. Epstein soon became a peddler selling his wares in Western Maryland, West Virginia and Pennsylvania. By 1881, he had raised enough money to buy his own store at 481 West Barre Street, and he later sent money to bring the rest of his family to America. Familiar with the needs of peddlers, Epstein started a jobbing business selling merchandise such as oil cloth, goods for dresses, and kitchenware, primarily to Jewish peddlers of the south. Some of his early bills were written in Yiddish (see enclosed photocopy). Business prospered and he soon moved to larger quarters and hired two assistants. By 1886, the business grew to include wholesaling for small retail stores and supplies such as clothing and jewelry. This necessitated another move to a larger location.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Jacob Epstein, Lester S. Levy, Baltimore: Marian Press, 1978.
Power Pictorial, May 1932.
Baltimore Magazine, August 1940.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY .432

UTM Reference: 18. 360430 .4349570

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Known as Lot 12 in Block 633 in Baltimore City Tax Records. Beginning at the northwest corner of West Baltimore and Liberty Streets, thence northeasterly 169' to intersect the southwest corner of Liberty Street and West Fairmount Avenue, thence westernly 158' to intersect the partition line between Lot 12 and the adjoining Lot 13/14, thence southernly 156' to intersect West Baltimore Street, thence easternly 95' to the place of the beginning.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE

COUNTY

STATE

COUNTY

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Fred B. Shoken, Assistant Research Analyst

ORGANIZATION

DATE

Commission for Historic and Architectural Preservation October 1979

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

Room 601 City Hall, 100 North Holliday Street 396-4866

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Baltimore

Maryland 21202

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature, to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 Supplement.

The Survey and Inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

RETURN TO: Maryland Historical Trust
 The Shaw House, 21 State Circle
 Annapolis, Maryland 21401
 (301) 267-1438

are fully arched with six over six lights. The roof cornice is double bracketed between
rs, and braced. The roof is covered with built-up tar and crushed stone.

The northern facade of the building is located along a narrow alley. Windows have long,
narrow three over three lights, with stone sills and splayed, gauged brick lintels. A
fire escape is located at the northeastern corner. The eastern facade is adjacent to
a five level parking garage. Five windows, identical to those on the northern facade,
are located on the rear of the upper five floors. A faded sign displaying "Baltimore
Bargain House" is visible at the top of the southeast corner.

The Baltimore Street entrance of the building leads to a first floor marble lobby, while
the Liberty Street entrance provides access to the ground floor. There are separate
entrances to the ground floor retail establishments. Reinforced concrete piers support
the floors on all levels 20 foot on center throughout. Floors are covered with asphalt
le. Ceilings are mostly drop accoustical tile. Walls are painted masonry and sheet rock.
Lighting on all floors is via flourescent lighting. Most of floors have large open "bull
pen" office spaces with smaller private offices located along the Baltimore Street and Liberty
Street building walls. Each floor has two lavatories and access via elevator and stairs.
The basement level of the building is used for storage and mechanical systems.

By 1894, he had two hundred employees and moved to 216 W. Baltimore Street, calling his business "Baltimore's Bargain House". At that time he initiated catalogue sales, reducing the costly expense of traveling salesmen. His building survived the Baltimore Fire of 1904, and soon after his business expanded to adjacent buildings on Baltimore Street and an annex was built on Fayette Street. In 1904, the business employed 800 clerks, and 100 bookkeepers. Sales also reached the \$1,000,000 mark in certain months. By that time he was doing business throughout the United States, yet soon an export business was established. In 1905, warehouses were acquired. By 1907 he had four trucks, his own composition room for laying out catalogues and his own clothing plant. It soon became apparent that a new building was needed -- one which would be worthy of the greatness of his business -- a building which is now known as the Civic Plaza Building.

The acquisition for the land for the new Baltimore Bargain House and the construction of the building cost \$2,000,000 from 1911 to 1912. The real estate transaction was the largest in the mercantile history of the city. Epstein wanted his building to be dignified with a first floor resembling a bank, so the building was designed to have marble floors on the first level with bank-like cages for cashiers and credit men. He also needed a building of mammoth proportions, therefore it was designed with 19,000 square feet of office space on each floor -- the largest wholesale establishment in the south.

Epstein hired Joseph Sperry as his architect for the project. Sperry had previously designed Epstein's magnificent house on Eutaw Place in 1904 (The building was a proposed local landmark, however it was demolished in 1969). Sperry also designed the Baltimore Arts Tower or the Emerson/Bromo Seltzer Tower, a National Register Place; the Provident Savings Bank, determined to be eligible for the National Register; and the Eutaw Place Temple in the Bolton Hill Historic District. Sperry designed the Baltimore Bargain House to be one of the City's most massive downtown buildings of its era. The building's height of twelve stories and its length, twenty-five bays wide wrapping

Significance cont'd.

2.

and a prominent Baltimore intersection, was on a much greater scale than anything surrounding it. Its pronounced cornice is extremely unusual for an office building of the time. Even today the building stands out but now as one of the few large older buildings in the vicinity of Charles Center which has survived the urban renewal programs of the 1960's.

Epstein's business continued to prosper in the years after the new Baltimore Bargain House was constructed. New warehouses and clothing factories were built. Gross sales had grown from \$4 million in 1910 to \$25 million in 1918. While profits rose from \$270,000 to \$3,000,000 and in the same time span. In 1919, the business was incorporated as the America Wholesale Corporation and stock was sold in the company. By 1920, he employed 1,600 people.

While his business was still profitable, in the mid-twenties, Epstein worried about the growing number of variety stores such as Woolworth's and J.C. Penny. Merchandise policies were also changing with goods being bought directly from manufacturers. Epstein decided to retire from his business ventures. He sold the company and leased the building to a nationwide wholesaler, Butler Brothers in 1929. The fortune which Epstein gathered throughout his years in the wholesaling business went back into the city, for he was not only one of Baltimore's strongest civic boosters in the early twentieth century, but a great philanthropist as well. After his death in 1945, a large portion of his estate was given to many local charitable organizations and his outstanding art collection was given to the City for display at the Baltimore Museum of Art.

Epstein's building, called the Butler Brothers Building for the next twenty five years, continued to serve the City as a wholesale establishment. Butler Brothers were established 1877 in Boston and grew to include seven distributing houses in Chicago, St. Louis, Boston, Minneapolis, Dallas, San Francisco, New York and Baltimore. The firm also controlled the Benjamin Franklin and Federated Stores throughout the nation. Butler Brothers extensively remodeled the building's interior in 1940 and when it reopened

a local magazine called its displays the finest in America. In 1943, a great reorganization of the company took place. The firm decided to occupy only the ninth floor of the building and rent out the remaining floors. Fifteen years later the building was sold to a large New York firm. Until recently the B.&O Railroad and N.A.C. Corporation occupied most of the building's floor space. However today it is largely vacant except for the first floor retail establishments. Today the building is an excellent candidate for rehabilitation and preservation as an early twentieth century office building.

Perhaps the best summary of the building's significance is the following poem which was written shortly before the building opened in 1912. Reprinted in part in Jacob Epstein's biography, the poem was written by Folger McKinzey.

Fronting with broad face on the busy street
Its aspect massive, noble, leonine.
Designed on simple graces, but complete
The casual vision marks it strong and fine.
... There it stands
A monument to toil of heart and hands,
Based on the small beginnings dating back
Unto street stand and the oilcloth pack.
The embryo store, the tiny wareroom, skill,
To purchase wisely, sell with wisdom, till
The little added to a little more
Sets the emporium where the little store
Stood in its small beginnings, and the end
Is the skyscraper, with its lines that blend
In perfect unison with street and town-
A young life-effort's fitting knob and crown!

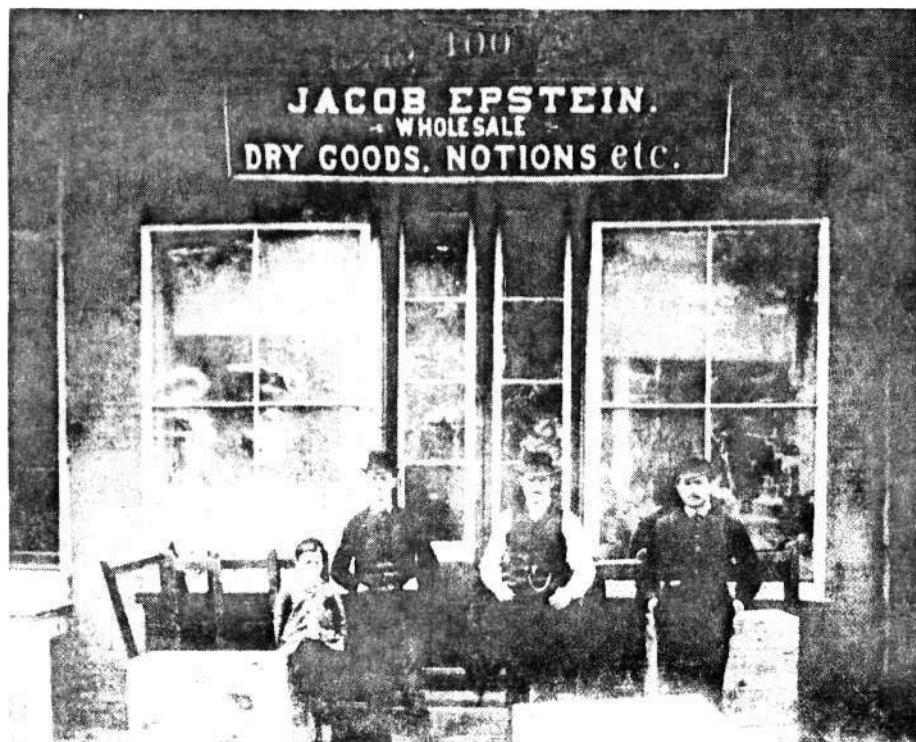
The Tower of Trade upon the Muses calls,
And song sees clear to set forth in clear light
That not the steel, the brick, the mortar tell
All of the story of this landmark bright,
But that within its massive frame the spell
Of all Time stands for in the trade of life
Is centered firmly - here a human strife
Against great odds, a boyish will and dream,
Rises in cognate glory, floor and beam
Built on manly spirit, judgement, gift
The inner self the outer self to lift,
And having lifted to give self again
Back in great gifts of charity to men!



PORTRAIT OF JACOB EPSTEIN BY SIR WILLIAM ORPEN

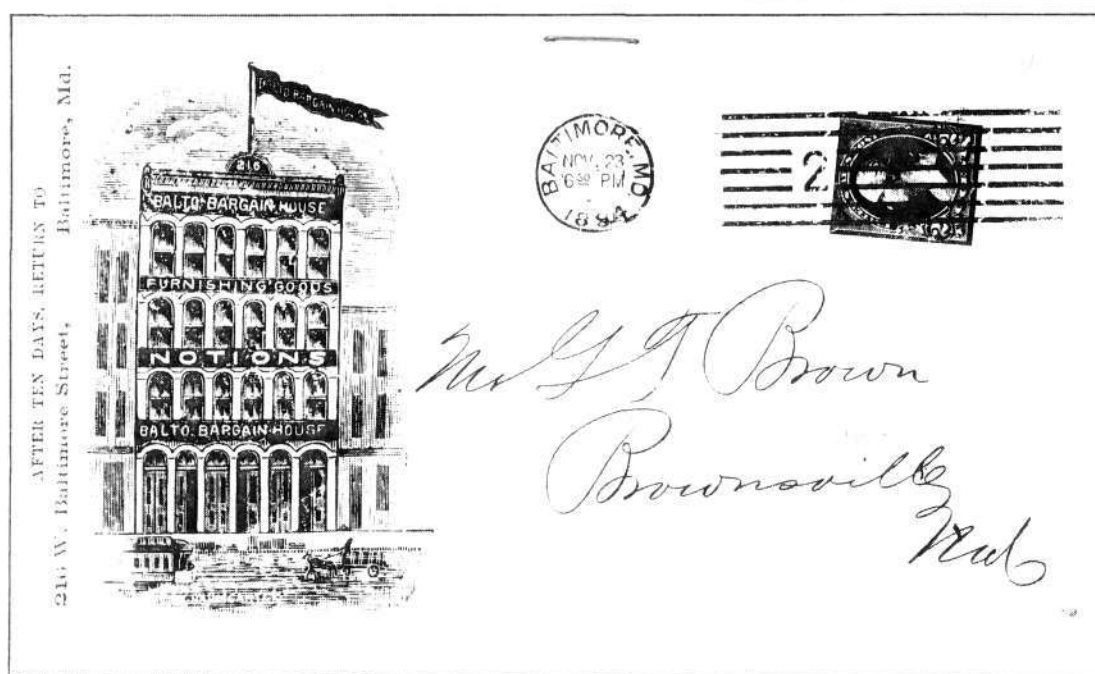
COURTESY EPSTEIN COLLECTION
BALTIMORE MUSEUM OF ART

From Jacob Epstein, color print, page after preface.



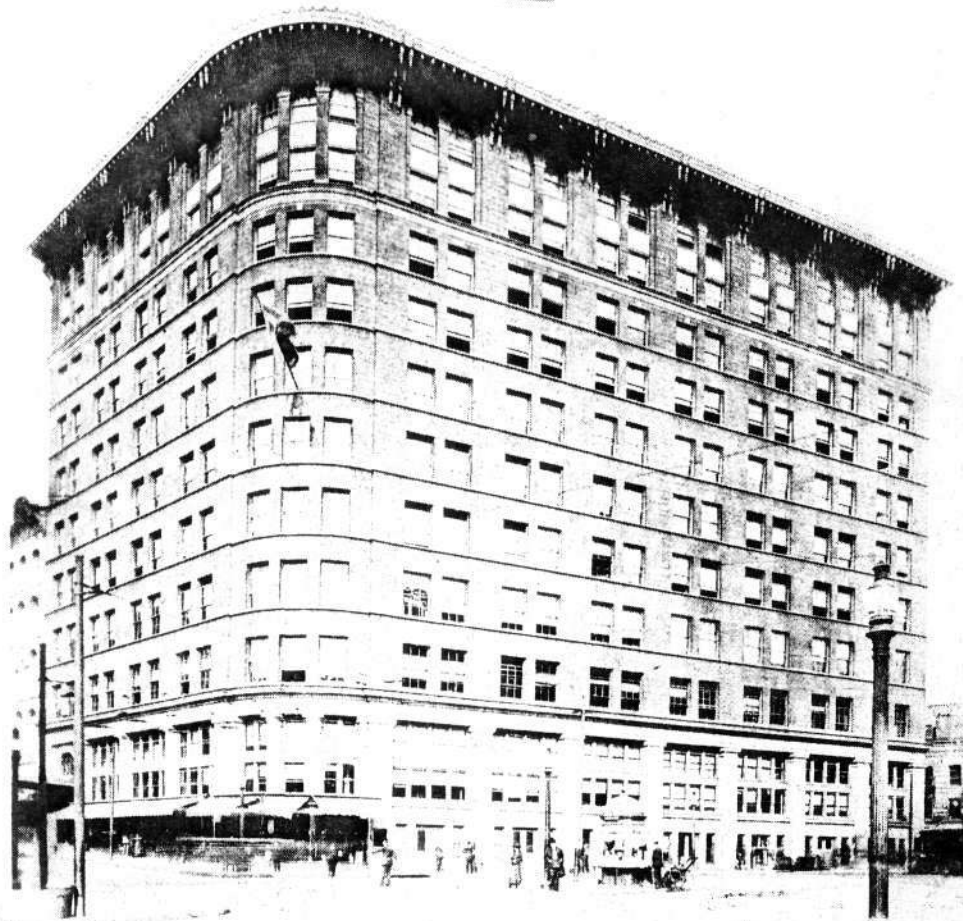
STORE AT 100 BARRE STREET. NATHAN EPSTEIN, JACOB EPSTEIN, SOLOMON COPLON, UNIDENTIFIED CLERK c1885

From Jacob Epstein, p. 16.



EARLIEST BALTIMORE BARGAIN HOUSE STATIONERY 1894

From Jacob Epstein, p. 20.



NEW BALTIMORE BARGAIN HOUSE BUILDING,
BALTIMORE AND LIBERTY STREETS 1912

From Jacob Epstein, p. 24.



BUILDINGS OF AMERICAN WHOLESALE CORPORATION 1929

From Jacob Epstein, p. 26.



INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Butler Building

AND/OR COMMON

Civic Plaza Building

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

200-208 W. Baltimore Street

CITY, TOWN

Baltimore

VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

Maryland

COUNTY

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

☐ DISTRICT
☒ BUILDING(S)
☐ STRUCTURE
☐ SITE
☐ OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

☐ PUBLIC
☒ PRIVATE

☐ BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

☐ IN PROCESS
☐ BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

☒ OCCUPIED
☐ UNOCCUPIED
☐ WORK IN PROGRESS
ACCESSIBLE
☐ YES: RESTRICTED
☒ YES: UNRESTRICTED
☐ NO

PRESENT USE

☐ AGRICULTURE ☐ MUSEUM
☒ COMMERCIAL ☐ PARK
☐ EDUCATIONAL ☐ PRIVATE RESIDENCE
☐ ENTERTAINMENT ☐ RELIGIOUS
☐ GOVERNMENT ☐ SCIENTIFIC
☐ INDUSTRIAL ☐ TRANSPORTATION
☐ MILITARY ☐ OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Telephone #:

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

VICINITY OF

STATE, zip code

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Records Office Room 601

Liber #:

Folio #:

STREET & NUMBER

Baltimore City Courthouse

CITY, TOWN

Baltimore

STATE

Maryland 21202

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

City of Baltimore Neighborhood Survey

DATE

1976

☐ FEDERAL ☐ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☒ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

COMMISSION FOR HISTORICAL &

CITY, TOWN

ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION

STATE

Room 900

26 South Calvert St.

Baltimore, Md. 21202

7 DESCRIPTION

B-2354

CONDITION

☐ EXCELLENT
☒ GOOD
☐ FAIR

☐ DETERIORATED
☐ RUINS
☐ UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

☐ UNALTERED
☒ ALTERED

CHECK ONE

☒ ORIGINAL SITE
☐ MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

This large office building is twelve stories high. The first three stories are ashlar stone, the upper stories are common bond.

The first story is considerably altered and is a series of double glass doors and sheet glass windows.

Second and third story windows are double hung with one-over-one lights. These windows are arranged in fours, each group being contained by flat ashlar pilasters which rise from the first story to the blank entablature above the third story. Above the entablature is a dentiled cornice.

Windows of the upper stories are grouped in pairs; all are double hung with six-over-six lights in flat arches (twelfth story windows are in stilted round arches of stone). These have splayed brick lintels with stone keystones. Sills are formed by stone string courses in all stories except the twelfth. Between the eleventh and twelfth story windows are decorative marble panels inset in the masonry. These panels contain simple rectangle-diamond motifs.

Between the tenth and eleventh stories is a stone belt course ornamented with dentils and rondelles.

The very pronounced roof cornice is double bracketed between bays, and braced.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

This large masonry office building was completed in 1911. Still relatively intact, its unusually pronounced cornice gives it a singular appearance.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY _____

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE

COUNTY

STATE

COUNTY

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Planning Assistants

ORGANIZATION

COMMISSION FOR HISTORICAL &
ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION
Room 900

DATE

1976

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

26 South Calvert St.

STATE

Baltimore, Md. 21202

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature, to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 Supplement.

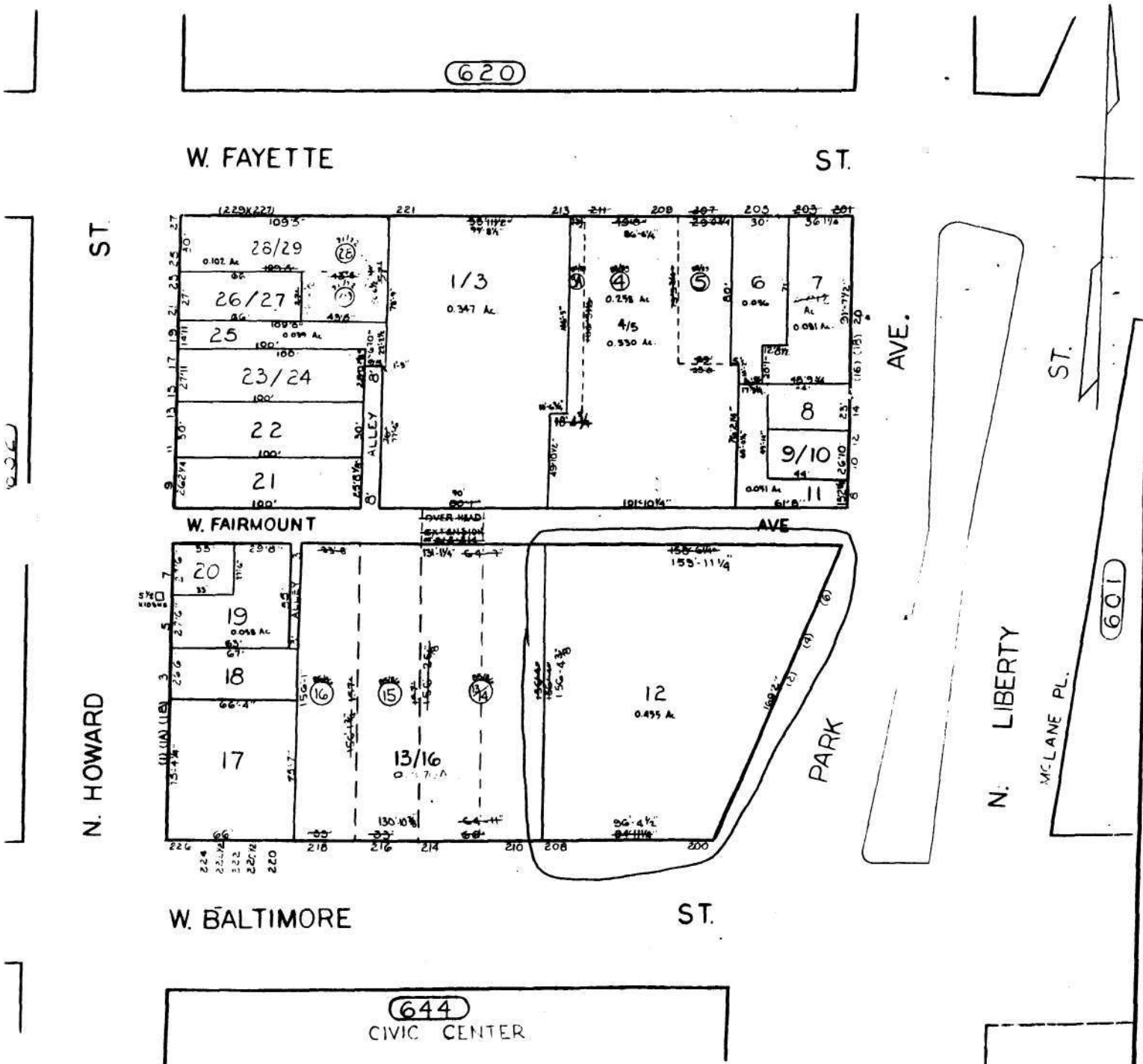
The Survey and Inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

RETURN TO: Maryland Historical Trust
The Shaw House, 21 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(301) 267-1438

REVISIONS

LOT 28/29 PER PLS.; C.S.H. 409
 LOT 7 AWM CHANGED PER LETTER C.S.H. 84-052
 LOT 1/3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 11, 12, 19, 25 (28/29) AWM CHANGED PER PLS. C.S.H. 81-219
 LOTS 13/14, 15 & 16 DIM CORP PER DEED, C.S.H. 85-487
 LOTS 13/14, 15 & 16 CONSD PER APP CH SH 86-253
 LOT 2A, 4 & 5 CONSD PER O.O. (App) C.S.H. 85-467

B-23541



ED BY P. W. WRIGHT

RED BY P.W.

NOTICE

THIS IS A REAL PROPERTY PLAT AS PROVIDED FOR UNDER ARTICLE 76(d) OF THE CITY CHARTER IT IS COMPILED FROM TITLE AND OTHER

CITY OF BALTIMORE
 DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

PROPERTY LOCATION DIVISION

WARD 4 SECTION 10
 BLOCK 633



D-2354

200-08 W. Baltimore St.

Neg #17
5/76

P. Sussman

Block

633